

REMARKS

As an initial note, the Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for the thorough examination and for indicating that claims 17-21 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Although the Applicants disagree that claim 16 does not define over the cited patent document, in order to expedite issuance of a notice of allowability, the Applicants have cancelled claim 16 along with non-elected claims 1-15, without prejudice as to patentability including the doctrine of equivalents, and accordingly rewritten claim 17 and claim 18 to include the limitations of claim 16. The remaining elected claims are either directly or indirectly dependent upon claims 17 or 18. The Applicants submit that the amendments were not necessary to overcome the cited reference, and that no new matter has been added. The Applicants have also added dependent claims 22-24 which are directly or indirectly dependent upon claim 18. Support for the new claims 22-24 can be found directly in original claims 20 and 21.

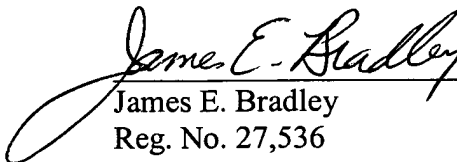
CONCLUSION

In view of the amendments and remarks set forth herein, Applicants respectfully submit that the application is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, the issuance of a Notice of Allowability in due course is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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